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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the career attitudes of three groups of learning disabled (LD) adolescents: (1) 30 LD students enrolled in secondary regular classes, (2) 30 LD students enrolled in secondary vocational training classes, and (3) 30 LD students enrolled in the regular secondary classes and receiving additional services through Learning Resource Centers. Ss were given the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised and the Career Maturity Inventory, a measure of attitude maturity for effective decision making. Results suggested that the LD students in regular classes were superior to the other groups studied in career attitudes. An additional finding was that significant differences in career attitudes existed in the three LD groups. (Author/DB)

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Affective and Career Education: Research Implications For the Learning Disabled Adolescent

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The learning disabled adolescent is an issue of serious concern for professionals and parents (Goodman, 1978; Mann, Goodman, & Wiederholt, 1978; Wiig & Semel, 1976). Several facts help to explain why this is so. First, it has become painfully apparent that many pupils who were diagnosed in elementary school as learning disabled, have not responded adequately to the training and treatment efforts provided them during their earlier grades (Zigmond, 1978). Second, historically, school systems and professionals have directed their initial efforts toward learning disabilities in the upper elementary grades (Touzel, 1978; Lerner, Evans, & Meyers, 1977; Deshler, 1978; Mori, 1980). Third, recent Federal Legislation (Public Law 94-142, 1975) and state Due Process regulations mandate that services be provided for these students, and thus, over the next several years school systems will succumb to the pressures of parents, educators, and the courts, and begin providing programming on a large scale for secondary students with learning disabilities (Abeson, Bolick, & Hass, 1975; Ballard & Zettel, 1977, Hayes & Higgins, 1978; Hudson & Graham, 1978; Zigmond, 1978).

With the enactment of recent legislation, career education for learning disabled students has received serious consideration

throughout the profession. Learning disabled students have traditionally been excluded from such programs because guidelines generally restrict participation to only the most severely handicapped. Also, limited attempts have been made in this direction because of the emphasis on remediation of basic skills of younger children. Consequently, the secondary school has been under attack from various directions for several years (Marsh, Gearheart & Gearheart, 1978; Miller, 1975).

Educators now have the benefit of critiques of secondary school programming and know their shortcommings (Cruickshank, 1977; Deshler, 1978; Goodman & Mann, 1975; Larsen, 1978; McNutt & Heller, 1978; Mercer, 1979) many of which must be avoided in structuring career education designs for learning disabled students. It is important, therefore, as new programs are developed and before implementation becomes finalized, that a variety of affective and career education practices be examined. Specifically, this study investigated the extent to which three groups of learning disabled adolescents differed on career attitudes as related to making a sound career decision. The null hypothesis of no difference was formulated.

Overview

Affective education has received considerable coverage in the literature (Aspy, 1977; Calhoun & Elliott, 1977; Gordon, 1973; Hamachek, 1973; Kelley, 1973; Lickona, 1977; Mouly, 1973). Affective education usually appears as a high priority on most lists of

educational goals (Spears, 1973; Stermer & Katzenmeyer, 1976), and should be a primary goal of general public education (Schmuck, 1960; Yagel, 1975).

Special educators have also expressed a need for their students to receive training in the affective domain (Yagel, 1975). Attitudinal behavior is considered to be an essential educational parameter for most handicapped students. Special eductors, therefore, have an especially critical role to play in affective eduation, an area considered to be an integral part of career education (Brolin & D'Alonzo, 1979; Chapman, 1972; Harmin, 1977). To insure maximum program effectiveness, methods of implementing needed affective education services should occur in regular and special education programs (Kelley, Bullock, & Dykes, 1977).

Career education is a means of changing the curriculum, improving the schools, and improving the lives of students who may more meaningfully relate themselves to the world. A career is the culumination or totality of work that is accomplished in a lifetime (Brolin, 1977; Gysbers & Moore, 1975; Hansen, 1977; Miller, 1973). Career education includes the basic tool subjects of the curriculum, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Also affective education variables, including attitudes, self-concept, and social values which are essential characteristics of a good employee.

Career attitudes refer to the affective rather than intellectual reactions of individuals toward career choice. Incorporated in the concept are the person's feelings related to involvement in

the career choice process, orientation toward work, independence in decision making, preference for career choice factors, and conceptions of the career choice process. Several studies (Asbury, 1967; Bovee, 1967; Gilliland 1966; Goodson, 1969) suggest that career counseling, both individual and group, can enhance career attitude maturity.

Critique of Research Studies

Current conceptualizations of career education for exceptional children emphasize affective experiences and activities in regard to occupational choice, as well as preparation in specific job related skills (Bingham, 1978). Although several studies have focused on career education for exceptional children, few have questioned whether adolescents with learning disabilities have incorporated attitudes about themselves that are reflective of their eventual work behaviors. Of those that have been reported (D'Alonzo & Miller, 1977; Lerner, Evans & Meyers, 1977, Levy, 1973; Marland, Lichtenwald & Burke, 1975; Wallace & Larsen, 1978) conclude that instructional approaches to the learning disabled adolescent must emphasize relevancy of emotional, social, educational, and career education components. Without such recognition on the part of the teacher, the program will encounter major difficulties.

A variety of differences of opinion concerning the nature and structure of career education are substantial. They result in part from the different perspectives individuals and groups have about human growth and development and their social institutions (Gysbers & West, 1975). These differences form the basis for a number of

critical issues in career education that must be resolved if its full potential is to be realized and if learning disabled students are to receive the type of career preparation needed for successful living and working in todays complex and rapidly changing society (Mori, 1980).

Learning Disabled Adolescents in Resource Centers

The volume of literature describing the learning resource model as a special education delivery system has increased at a rapid pace over the last decade (D'Alonzo, D'Alonzo, & Mauser; 1979; Gickling, Murphy & Mallory, 1979; Hammill & Wiederholt, 1972; Jenkins & Mayhall, 1973; Lance, 1975; McLoughlin & Kass, 1978; Reger, 1972; Sabatino, 1972; Swart, 1979; Wiederholt, 1974; Wiederholt, Hammill & Brown, 1978). Recent legislation mandating educational services for handicapped children, a paucity of existing resources in the face of apparent need, and a professional commitment to mainstreaming have fostered the development of resource programs in place of, and occasionally in addition to, the more traditional self-contained special class model.

While the efficacy of programs offered through the resource model remains to be determined, a pattern of flaws have been reported in the conceptualization of services offered to LD students through this design (Burgett & Dodge, 1976; Cruickshank, 1974. 1977; Gickling & Theobald, 1975; Harris & Mahar, 1975; Jenkins & Mayhall, 1976; Payne & Murray, 1974; Shotel, Iano & McGettigan, 1972; Speece & Mandell, 1980). Furthermore, our initial faltering efforts

to offer services to LD children with other handicaps almost exclusively through the resource room model indicate a need for study (Cruickshank, 1977).

Vocational Training Programs

Recent federal mandates promote the need for additional vocational education and employment opportunities for the handicapped (Razeghi & Davis, 1979). However, in actual practice, special education has not yet developed a strong, on-going secondary programmatic effort, and it rarely encourages regular and vocational educators to initiate program development for handicapped adolescents. Historically, special education teachers have not been professionally prepared to develop or implement secondary level programs that address the issue of employment.

A large body of research (e.g., Brolin, Durand, Kromer, & Muller, 1975; Chaffin, Davison, Regen, & Spellman, 1971; Gold, 1976; Hoyt, 1975; Kidd, Cross, & Higginbotham, 1967; KoKaska, 1968; Phelps & Lutz, 1977; Strickland & Arrell, 1967), revealed that vocational adjustment improved markedly if handicapped students were provided with a more occupationally oriented program. Follow-up studies of the adjustment of handicapped students have found that affective variables and daily living skills are also inextricably related to the vocational success of these individuals (Beedy, 1971; Burger Collins, & Doherty, 1970; Kolstoe, 1961; Sali & Amir, 1971; Stephens & Peck, 1968).

If the handicapped are to receive the full advantage of existing vocational programs, the best possible match must be made between

the handicapped individual and the program or job placement and the maximum amount of relevant data must be gathered on the trainee. This match between abilities and program or job requirements is particularly crucial for handicapped individuals because they may lack some of the flexibility to compensate for and adjust to programs or jobs for which they are not fully qualified (Sitlington, 1979).

Research Implications

The need to implement learning disability programs at the secondary level is so urgent that programs are rapidly emerging in junior and senior high schools in spite of the lack of research, assessment instruments, exemplary and model programs, appropriate materials, and above all, teachers trained for work with learning disabled adolescents (Lerner, Evans & Meyers, 1977).

As special educators totally immerse themselves in the design and implementation of programs or research on learning disabled adolescents they often tend to ignore current trends and issues in secondary education as a whole (Deshler, 1978; Meyen & Deshler, 1978). Since learning disabilities are largely an educational phenomenon and problem (Larsen, 1978), special educators must be keenly aware of events in secondary schools in general and make programming and research decisions within that context.

Both career and special education professionals need to establish additional models and conduct further research in present designs (Porter, 1980). Early involvement in career activities can

engage the students in what Renzulli (1977) calls attacking "real" problems and producing "real" products, since career education programs usually provide some form of "hands on" experiences in the real world of work.

Method

Subjects

Ninety subjects were chosen from five high schools in the inner city of a large metropolitan area. The test subjects were randomly selected so that a cross section of male-female, and black-white were represented.

The three groups included: (a) 30 LD students enrolled in secondary regular classes, (b) 30 LD students enrolled in secondary vocational training classes, and (c) 30 LD students integrated in the regular secondary classes and receiving additional support beyond that ordinarily provided in regular classes through Learning Resource Centers. The subjects were assigned to the identified setting for a period of at least two years for inclusion in this study. Additional subject characteristics are presented in Table 1.

The reintegrated subjects were exposed to treatment through learning resource centers. The center consisted of a double or triple-sized classroom staffed by learning disability teachers experienced in diagnostic and prescriptive techniques, and additional support personnel. Subjects attended the learning resource center approximately 40 minutes per day, 5 days a week.

TABLE 1

Means and Standard Deviations (SD_s) for Chronological Age (CA)[a] Career Attitude[b] and IQ[c] for the Three Groups

Groups	CA[a]		Career Attitude[b]		IQ[c]	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Regular	163.13	7.42	44.61	5.84	86.16	7.02
Vocational	204.53	5.59	36.64	4.97	82.57	6.71
Resource Center	176.43	8.46	41.32	4.06	77.56	3.75

[a]In Months.

[b]Career Maturity Inventory.

[c]Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised.

Procedure

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) was used to determine the intellectual classification range for participants in this sample.

The attitude scale of the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1978) was used to determine career attitudes. The inventory evaluates the maturity of attitudes that are critical in realistic career decision making. The attitude scale elicits the feelings, subjective reactions, and dispositions that the individual has toward making a career choice and entering the world of work. Is work seen as a meaningful focus of life or is it viewed as drudgery? How involved and independent is the individual in the choice process? What considerations are made in selecting a career? These and other conative aspects of decision making are stated in the items of the Attitude Scale as they have actually been verbalized by young people. More specifically, five attitudinal variables are surveyed: decisiveness in career decision making; involvement in career decision making; independence in career decision making; orientation to career decision making; and compromise in career decision making.

The Attitude Scale is a 75-item true or false survey questionnaire, which can be administered on an individual or group basis. For this study, the attitude scale was administered in groups of seven to ten. Prior to the administration of the instrument, rapport was established with each group of testees by discussing the general nature of the test. Attitude testing was

begun and completed during the fall 1979.

Research suggestions

The Attitude Scale, is considered a research instrument in terms of the data available for interpretation of the separate variables. A basic utility of the attitude scale is its validity as an operational definition of the Career Choice Attitides dimension in career maturity (Crites & Semler, 1967; Crites, 1965), which has been used extensively to test hypothesis stemming from career development theory.

Research suggest that the Attitude Scale has been utilized in testing low socio-economic groups, minority group populations, vocational training programs, and local and state guidance systems to determine what the career attitude is for junior and senior high students and how it might be improved (Crites, 1971; Day, 1975; Dutt, 1968; Herr & Cramer, 1972; Hoyt, 1962; Kershner & Blair, 1975; Marland, 1972; Owens & Fehrenbacher, 1975; Omvig, 1974; Perrone, 1972; Pucel & Nelson, 1972; Tamminen & Miller, 1968).

Results

The data were analyzed using the one way analysis of variance. Significant differences were found among the means of the career attitude scores of the three groups ($F=19.13$, 2/87 df, $p < .05$). Table 2 presents these results. Therefore, the hypothesis of no difference was rejected. Additional analyses of these findings were performed for all pairwise combinations of the means: (a) secondary regular LD group vs. vocational training LD group; (b) voca-

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance of Career Attitude Variables for the Three Groups

Source	SS	df	Ms	F
Total	3154.41	89		
Between	963.41	2	481.71	19.13*
Within	2191.00	87	25.18	

*$p < .05$

tional training LD group vs. Learning resource LD group; and (c) secondary regular LD group vs. learning resource group.

Analyses of the career attitude scores for the three groups revealed a significant differences between the Regular vs. vocational training, and vocational training vs. learning resource group means ($t=7.28$, $p < .01$, and $t=3.17$, $p < .01$ respectively). No significant difference was revealed between the regular vs. learning resource group ($t=2.53$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

Investigation has shown that career attitude of learning disabled adolescents in vocational training and learning resource centers were lower than that of regular class subjects. The vocational training classes demonstrated lower career attitude scores than the regular and learning resource groups. This was so even with an emphasis on career preparation. This finding is supportive of reports of (D'Alonzo & Miller, 1977; Lerner, Evans & Meyers, 1977; Levy, 1973; Marland, Lichenwald & Burke, 1975; Wallace & Larsen, 1978) that instructional approaches to the learning disabled adolescent must emphasize relevancy of emotional, social, educational and career education components.

A significant career attitude differences was revealed between the regular and vocational training, and vocational training and learning resource groups. An additional finding in the present study was that career attitude scores for the regular class subjects did

not differ significantly from the learning resource group.

Career education for the learning disabled adolescent is a critical issue for professionals and parents. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to review several of the obstacles concerning this trend. First, the movement toward career education of the learning disabled adolescent will fail if affective education of these students is not made a focus of concern.

Second, there must be cooperative career and affective education planning between learning disabilities and regular classroom teachers. Third, the diverse assortment of differences of opinion concerning the nature and structure of career education must be minimized if learning disabled adolescents are to receive the full potential of career education designs. Fourth, it is important that research efforts be initiated in career development practices, in order that learning disabled adolescents be provided the assistance necessary to make intelligent decisions concerning career choices.

This study has offered support to regular classes as being the most efficacious in career attitudes of learning disabled adolescents. However, additional research is needed for a number of unanswered questions before definite conclusions can be varified.

In conclusion, it has been suggested that significant differences in career attitude of learning disabled adolescents exist in secondary regular classes, Vocational training classes, and learning resource centers. This finding would suggest that learning disabled adolescents exhibit immaturity in the important attitudes associated with career choice. It is essential that learning disabled adoles-

cents be provided programs that facilitate the infusion of the affective variable of career attitude with career education designs.

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